

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, NU
SUBJECT NICARAGUAN PRESS CENSORSHIP?

SUMMARY: DURING PERIOD OF SOUL-SEARCHING BY GON RE
U.S.-NICARAGUAN RELATIONS IN NEW ERA IN WHICH HUMAN
RIGHTS APPEARS TO IT TO BE OF PRIMARY IMPORTANCE AMONG
OTHER ASPECTS OF THE RELATIONSHIP, THERE HAVE BEEN MANY
SIGNS THAT ALTHOUGH CENSORSHIP REMAINS THE LAW, IT IS NOT
BEING USED TO SUPPRESS DOMESTIC PRESSURE ON THE GOVERN-
MENT. END SUMMARY

1. THE FOLLOWING REPRESENT RECENT ARTICLES WHICH HAVE
APPEARED IN OPPOSITION NEWSPAPER LA PRENSA WHICH IS
THE BEST BAROMETER OF GON TOLERANCE OF DIRECT OR
IMPLICIT CRITICISM:

A. 4/14 HEADLINE--TIEMBLAN EN OEA LAS DICTADURAS--
REGARDING HUMAN RIGHTS; FRONTPAGE--TODAVIA NADA SOBRE VISA
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A P.J. CHAMORRO--REGARDING PROSCRIPTION ON HIS TRAVEL TO
WASHINGTON AT INVITATION OF REP. KOCH.

B. 4/13 HEADLINE--NUEVA POLITICA DE EEUU: DESARROLLO
CON DERECHOS--REGARDING ASST. SECTY. TODMAN'S SPEECH TO
IA-ECOSOC/TYING AID AND HUMAN RIGHTS; FRONTPAGE--DR.
CHAMORRO INVITADO AL CONGRESO DE EEUU--REPRINTING KOCH

CABLE.

C. 4/12 FRONTPAGE--AGUERO ROCHA: MI HIJO ERA
IDEALISTO--FATHER OF FSLN LEADER PRAISES SON AND SAYS HE
DOUBTS SON WAS KILLED AS REPORTED.

D. 4/11 PAGE 5--E.U. CONDICIONARIA AYUDA A NICARAGUA--
LATIN NEWS SERVICE COVERAGE; BACKPAGE--NOTA DEL GOBIERNO
EN REPLICA A E.U.--QUOTING GON COMMUNIQUE.

2. THERE HAVE BEEN ALMOST DAILY ARTICLES CRITICAL OF GOVERN-
MENT ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES SUCH AS CLEAR CUTTING OF
FORESTS, CONTAMINATION OF LAKES, CRITICISM OF FOREIGN
MINISTRY DEFENSE OF NATIONAL INTERESTS IN BOUNDARY NEGOTIATIONS, AND ON CIVIC MATTERS SUCH AS STATE OF DISREPAIR
OF STREETS, ETC.

3. THERE PROBABLY IS NO WAY GON COULD COMPLETELY MANAGE
NEWS REGARDING HUMAN RIGHTS EMPHASIS OF CARTER ADMINISTRATION FOREIGN POLICY. HOWEVER, WHEREAS GON-CONTROLLED
NOVEDADES OFTEN REPRINTS CRITICAL ARTICLES ON U.S. HUMAN
RIGHTS POLICY, LA PRENSA REPRINTS MOSTLY LAUDATORY ARTICLES.
BEYOND THAT, CHAMORRO HAS BEEN ABLE TO USE LA PRENSA TO
PROMOTE HIS OWN POLITICAL IMAGE AS KEY FIGURE IN NICARAGUA
SUMMONED BY U.S. CONGRESS BUT PROHIBITED FROM TRAVELING.

4. GON HAS ALSO ALLOWED RUMOR CAMPAIGN RE DEATH OF
FSLN LEADER AGUERO ECHEVARRIA AT HANDS OF GN TO SURFACE
AND THEN HAS PUBLICALLY REBUTTED RUMORS. FURTHER, IF
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GON WERE USING CENSORSHIP TO PROTECT ITSELF FROM CRITICISM RE INCOMPETENCE OR MALFEASANCE, IT WOULD BE
CENSORING IMPLIED CRITICISM ON FOREIGN POLICY, ENVIRONMENTAL AND PUBLIC SERVICES ISSUES.

5. COMMENT: DURING CRITICAL PERIOD FOR GON IN REACTING
TO U.S. CRITICISM ON HUMAN RIGHTS, THERE PROBABLY WAS
TEMPTATION FOR GON TO HIDE UNDER COVERS AND KEEP PUBLIC
UNAWARE OF PRESSURES TO WHICH IT WAS BEING SUBJECTED OR
AT LEAST PROTECT ITSELF FROM INCESSANT NEEDLING OF CHAMORRO
RE INCOMPETENCE. TO ITS CREDIT, THE GON HAS DONE NEITHER
AND THE EASING OF CENSORSHIP REPORTED EARLIER HAS CONTINUED
TO POINT WHERE THERE SEEMS TO BE LITTLE WHICH COULD NOT BE
AIED. AT SAME TIME CENSORSHIP CONTINUES IN EFFECT AND IS
AN IMPLIED THREAT WHICH KEEPS CHAMORRO AND OTHERS UNCERTAIN HOW FAR THEY CAN GO IN DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY CRITICIZING
THE GON.
THEBERGE

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Message Attributes

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